

Beneficial Insects and Others

The following listings describe common beneficial insects that help control harmful insects. Other beneficials include centipedes, dragonflies, damselflies, big-eyed bugs, predatory mites and many, many more. A very general rule of thumb for identifying a predator is this: if the jaws of the creature are pointing DOWN (that is, pointing at the surface they are walking on), they are plant-eaters. If the jaws are pointing OUT (that is, parallel to the surface they are walking on), they are predators.

In addition to these predators, there are many vertebrates such as birds, frogs, snakes, ducks, bats, mice, moles, squirrels and others snack on the eggs, larvae, pupae and adults of insects, mites and slugs.

Flower flies

Actual size:
Adult 1/2"
Larva 1/2"



Sometimes called hover or syrphid flies, these predators look somewhat like yellowjacket wasps but are much smaller and will not sting humans or other mammals. They are often found hovering near flowers, where they feed on pollen and nectar. Their larvae are legless and feed on aphids.

Honeybees

Actual size:
3/8" – 5/8"



Honeybees, although not predators, are very beneficial pollinators of many fruits and vegetables. Periodically a hive can become overcrowded and a large number of bees and a queen will leave to find a new home. These swarms, while spectacular to see, pose no real stinging threat since bees in a swarm are engorged with honey. The best way to deal with an unwanted swarm of bees is to call a reputable beekeeper who can, in 20 to 30 minutes, capture the queen bee. The rest of the swarm will follow. The swarm may leave on its own in as short a time as 30 minutes or remain clustered for as long as several days. (Calling the beekeeper, who wants the bees, as soon as possible will keep the bees from becoming pests in the neighborhood.) WSU Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners keeps a listing of beekeepers. The phone number is listed in the back of this book under Resources.

Lacewings

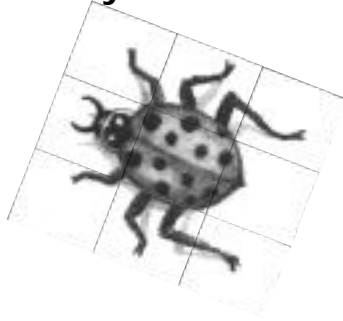
Actual size:
Adult 3/4"
Larva 1/2"



The most common lacewings are bright green insects with large gold eyes and delicate wings. They are about 3/4" long and eat pollen, honeydew and nectar. The larvae look something like tiny alligators, are tan, and eat aphids and other soft-bodied insects. A similar looking winged creature that is brown rather than green is the brown lacewing. It is also an effective aphid predator and is more tolerant of cool weather than the green lacewing.

Ladybird beetles

Actual size:
Adult 1/4" - 3/8"
Larva 1/8" - 1/2"



Better known as ladybugs, these black and red beetles are found throughout the world. There are thousands of species, many of which prefer only one or a few creatures for food. The most common species in Oregon eat aphids and other small, soft-bodied insects. The larvae of this beetle are usually black, 1/8" to 1/2" long, somewhat spiny, and look something like tiny alligators. They also eat many aphids.

Parasitic wasps

Actual size:
Adult 1/16" - 1/8"

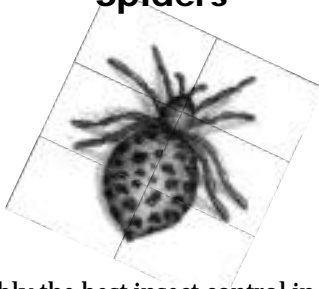
*Parasitic wasp
on aphid*



Most insects and many insect eggs are host to one or more species of parasitic wasps. Often tiny and delicate, parasitic wasps sting their host insects and lay eggs inside them. The eggs hatch inside the host and feed on it, eventually killing it. Aphids are commonly parasitized in this region, and some caterpillars are also attacked. Parasitic wasps are extremely effective at controlling insects, but are susceptible to most sprays. Parasitic wasps do not sting humans.

Spiders

Actual size:
1/16" – 3/4"



Spiders are probably the best insect control in your yard. They eat a wide variety of insects and are very common.

Predaceous ground beetles

Actual size:
Up to 1 3/8"



The large, glossy dark brown or black beetle with grooves down its back is a predator and will eat many insects.

Yellowjackets

Actual size:
Adult 1/2" – 3/4"



Yellowjackets are picnic pests because they are attracted to the protein in chicken, hot dogs and other barbecue fare. When they aren't at your barbecue, however, they are busy collecting insects to take back to the hive and feed the growing larvae. They are efficient predators, and do the gardener much more good than harm.